

# ADDRESS

BY

## J. G. THOMAS, M. D.,

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA,

IN DEFENSE OF THE

### NATIONAL BOARD OF HEALTH,

AGAINST ATTACKS IN CONGRESS, AND ON

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SAPELO QUARANTINE STATION

AS A PLACE OF

REFUGE FOR DANGEROUS AND INFECTED VESSELS  
FOR THE SOUTH-ATLANTIC STATES.

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READ BEFORE THE SAVANNAH CITIZENS' SANITARY ASSOCIATION IN SEPTEMBER, 1882, AND BEFORE THE GEORGIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY IN DECEMBER, 1882.

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SAVANNAH, GA.:  
MORNING NEWS STEAM PRINTING HOUSE.  
1883.



HODGSON HALL, December 4th, 1882.

The following resolution, offered by Col. Olmstead, was unanimously adopted:

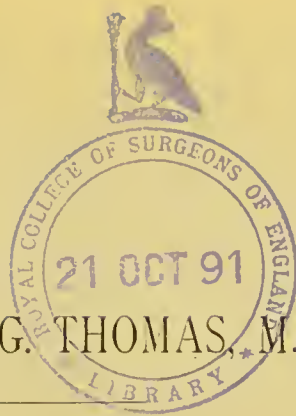
*"Resolved*, That the thanks of this Society be and they are hereby tendered to Dr. J. G. Thomas for the admirable paper read to us this evening, in which he has so ably advocated a cause of peculiar interest to this community, and that he be requested to furnish a copy of said paper for preservation among the archives of the Soc ety."

After its adoption it was moved and carried that the last clause be amended by requesting Dr. Thomas to publish the paper under the Society's auspices.

A true extract from the minutes of the Georgia Historical Society.

S. B. ADAMS,

*Recording Secretary.*



## ADDRESS BY J. G. THOMAS, M. D.

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It will be remembered that on the 18th of July last the Executive Council of the Citizens' Sanitary Association, learning that Sapelo quarantine station was about to be abandoned, took active steps to prevent it. The President of the association was instructed to send a telegram to all of our Representatives in Congress asking their active co-operation in the endeavor to keep this station up; also to telegraph the National Board of Health, requesting the continuance of the station at least for this season. Subsequently the authorities of the city of Savannah, in conjunction with those of Charleston, South Carolina, sent on to Washington their Health Officers to represent both to Congress and the National Board of Health the importance of this station in aiding us against the introduction of yellow fever into our South Atlantic ports.

The National Board of Health agreed to keep the station in operation for the present season, but candidly said, that unless an appropriation was made by Congress, that it would be impossible that the station could be sustained another year. It is well known that Congress refused to give practical effect to all the recommendations of the National Board of Health by appropriating the funds necessary to carry them out, and that it is probable that this is the last season of the existence of Sapelo station.

Comparatively few, however, know what the recommendations of the National Board of Health were, or upon what grounds they were based, and it seems desirable that the people of Savannah, (and of Georgia), should have some information on this subject, and also the part played by their representatives in legislation on this subject. In the last few weeks I have taken the trouble to study this question,

with the view of ascertaining, if possible, the reason Congress did not make the necessary appropriation, and I have endeavored to do this, I hope, in the most candid spirit, without prejudice for or against the National Board of Health, and, indeed, without prejudice for or against any one. My earnest desire was to ascertain the truth, and ultimately benefit my people.

I must say to you that I have long held the opinion that it was the duty of the United States government to give aid in some shape to Southern ports in their efforts to keep out contagious and infectious diseases, being convinced that efficient assistance could be rendered without in any sense compromising State or municipal rights. The first evidence that the general government would move in this direction was when the Act was passed to establish the National Board of Health.

I shall now proceed to give you a succinct account of the plans and operations of the National Board of Health from its inception, and will give you, in round numbers, its expenditures, taken from official sources, for the three years of its work, and touch upon the causes of the failure of Congress to make the requisite appropriation to enable the board to carry out its plans for the next year.

The National Board was organized in the spring of 1879 on a plan approved by all the leading scientific men and sanitarians of the country. The Act of its creation required it to collect information and give advice. It was to gain information through our Consuls as to the health of all the ports in the world. If epidemic and contagious diseases were prevalent, it was the duty of the board to know it, and, also, the condition of vessels leaving those ports, and to give advice to local authorities who had no means of gaining such knowledge. At a glance, you must see the value of this. Subsequently, a quarantine Act was passed, (June 2, 1879), which made it the duty of the board to keep contagious and infectious diseases out of the country, and to give aid to State and local boards, but giving it practically

no authority to interfere with such local boards. To enable it to carry out the Act which created it, *i. e.*, to make investigations into the causes of disease and to discover means for preventing it, fifty thousand dollars were appropriated. To enable it to carry out the quarantine Act, five hundred thousand dollars were appropriated. I beg that you will remember at this point that, under these Acts, the whole of these amounts could have been spent by the board the first year had it chosen to have done so. It may be a question whether it would have been wise in the board to have done so; it is very certain that it did not do so.

After a careful investigation of the subject, and consulting with every practical sanitarian and quarantine officer in the United States, the board decided that, as far as preventing of yellow fever was concerned, the most practical thing the United States could do would be to prepare refuge stations on the South Atlantic and Gulf coasts to which Southern ports could send dangerous and suspected vessels for treatment in accordance with our best present knowledge of the subject. This plan gave substantial aid to local authorities, while in no way interfering with their rights or powers.

The fitting up such refuge quarantine stations in such a manner that the passengers and crew of an infected ship can be properly cared for, and the ship itself thoroughly cleansed and disinfected so that it shall no longer be a source of danger, costs money. The quarantine establishment of New York City, which is the only complete one in the United States, fitted to meet all emergencies, cost over a million of dollars. Such an establishment should have buildings for the well passengers and crew who are to be kept under observation, a hospital for those afflicted with diseases which are not contagious, a hospital for yellow fever cases, a hospital for small-pox, (the New York establishment has also a cholera hospital), at least two warehouses for storage of infected cargoes, since those coming from different ships should not be mixed, a good wharf, buildings for disinfection of infected clothing and cargo, a tow boat to put ships in proper



position, residences for the officers and men of the station, etc. It is manifestly impossible that every little port on the Southern coasts should provide all these things. The board concluded that if two such stations were established on the South Atlantic, and two on the Gulf coast, they would be sufficient for protection for the present. Such establishments cannot be created in a day—it is at least a year's work to fit up one properly.

Bearing in mind that by Act of Congress the board had been ordered to prevent, as far as possible, the admission of yellow fever into this country, and five hundred thousand dollars had been given to it for the purpose, what was its duty? Clearly, to set about fitting up these stations with the least possible delay, so that they might be ready for the coming spring. And this is what it did: It succeeded in getting permission to occupy Blackbeard Island, on the South Atlantic coast, and Ship Island on the Gulf coast—both being already the property of the United States—and it proceeded to put up a wharf and the cheapest possible wooden buildings, or rather sheds, at those points, and then make known to the neighboring ports that they could send dangerous ships there if they chose. The board could not proceed to equip the two other refuge stations which it considered desirable, viz., one at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay and one at Galveston, because the United States owned no land at these places suitable for such a station, and special legislation on the part of both the State and the United States seemed necessary before such land could be procured. Meantime, the board had been doing other things which it had been by law directed to do. It had furnished funds for fighting the fever in Memphis and New Orleans; had aided State and local boards in the Southwest to frame and carry out a system of inspections which gave security to threatened communities for the first time without interfering with travel or commerce; it had collected statistics of the most valuable kind to awaken interest in sanitary matters; published its bulletin, filled with concentrated ideas,

and spread it broadcast over the country to give light and interest in matters pertaining to health; made investigations into diphtheria, yellow fever, water impurities, sewerage, etc. It kept a skilled inspector at Havana, another at Matamoras, and employed others to investigate the actual condition of all the quarantine establishments on the Atlantic coast. From April, 1879, until July, 1882, all this varied and vast work, only to be fully comprehended by those who have such things to do, was prosecuted, and the total amount expended was five hundred and fifty-six thousand six hundred and eleven dollars and seventy-six cents, or a little over five thousand dollars more than what had been given to expend the first year, if found necessary.

I beg, now, that you will bear in mind that the Citizens' Sanitary Association, as well as the city authorities, had appealed to all our representatives in Congress to aid in the passage of an Act to appropriate means to sustain the Sapelo station. The representative, of all others who could have given assistance to this end, was the Hon. J. H. Blount, of the Sixth Congressional District of Georgia, because of his position upon the committee before which the appropriation must go. I have been greatly surprised to find how persistently he fought every appropriation to the National Board of Health, and not always with the most correct statement of facts. That the hostile attitude of Mr. Blount to the National Board of Health had much weight with Northern members, who for the most part were totally unacquainted with the facts of the case, is certain. He was a prominent member of the Committee of Appropriations, and from a State which has had melancholy experience in yellow fever. He declared that the first proposition for the establishment of the board grew out of the appearance of yellow fever in Savannah. The fact is, it grew out of the epidemic of 1878 in the Mississippi Valley, and there had been no yellow fever in Savannah for several years. He declared that the object of the appropriation was to provide funds in case the yellow fever or cholera should break out. The object really

was, and the law is perfectly plain, to prevent the entrance of cholera and yellow fever—which is a very different and a much more practical and important purpose.

The Act of June 2d, 1879, made it the duty of the National Board to co-operate “with, and, as far as it lawfully may to aid State and municipal boards of health in the execution and enforcement of the rules and regulations made by such boards to prevent the introduction of contagious and infectious diseases into the United States from foreign countries, and from one State into another.”

It will be observed how very careful the patron of the Bill had been to avoid any encroachment on the police powers of the local health authorities. The National Board has no authority under this law to grant free *pratique* to a vessel desiring to enter any of the ports of the United States, however well satisfied it may be that such vessel is absolutely free from all danger of communicating infection. Here, in Savannah, it is well known that the operations of the Sapelo Sound station have been conducted with a strict adherence to this principle, and that the Superintendent, Dr. W. H. Elliott, one of our own citizens, has been instructed to give a pledge to the health authorities of the South Atlantic ports that the station was to be conducted purely as a place of refuge for infected vessels sent thither by the local quarantine officers, and that it was intended to be in aid of them, in conformity with the law. This is now fully recognized by the authorities from Charleston to Fernandina inclusive. They recognize, also, the inestimable value of such aid. Owing to earnest and emphatic representations to this effect by the health authorities of South Carolina, the entire delegation from that State, in both houses of Congress, supported the liberal amendments of the Senate to the nullifying appropriation Bill which had passed the lower house. It was reserved for a representative from Georgia to take an active and leading part in defeating the hopes of the Southern States, and to attempt to justify himself by a series of the most extraordinary misrepresentations. He avowed that the board has



never observed at all that portion of the law which requires that its disbursements should be made under the sanction of the Secretary of the Treasury, on estimates made to him by the board and approved by him. This remarkable statement struck us with great surprise. As all of the expenditures of the board are necessarily audited by the First Comptroller of the Treasury, we did not see how Mr. Blount's assertion could be made good without a great dereliction of duty on the part of that officer, and *prima facie* such dereliction was improbable. Making inquiry, we learn that in every case a formal requisition, stating the object for which a portion of the general fund is desired, is submitted to the Treasury Department, and is approved before any expenditure is made, and that when bills are presented for payment the actual expenditures are again subjected to the scrutiny of the First Comptroller of the Treasury. It is inexcusable that a representative, who, as Chairman of the Sub-Committee having in charge the preparation of the sundry civil appropriation Bill for the preceding Congress, had every opportunity to ascertain the exact facts, should have perverted them to this extent.

Again, Mr. Blount asserts that it was the intention of Congress, after four years of operation of the Board in this connection, that it should cease to exist. He must have known that the limitation in question, which applies only to the quarantine Act of June 2, 1879, and not at all to the constituting Act of March 3d of the same year, was not in the Bill as originally drafted by Senator Harris, and that when Senator Morgan, of Alabama, proposed the amendment imposing such a limitation, it was avowedly done with a view of testing the efficiency of the instrumentality then created for the first time, and with no declared intention of terminating its existence at the end of the term. In this sense Senator Harris promptly accepted the amendment. The object of the law was to *prevent* the introduction of contagious and infectious diseases into the country from the places of their exotic origin, and we venture to assert

that no respectable representative of the South Atlantic and Gulf States will make the assertion that all the numerous localities along their extended maritime borders will have "the power to take care of themselves" at the end of four years. They undoubtedly have the capacity and the power to inspect vessels entering their ports from foreign ports and places at which infectious diseases prevail, but few or none of them possess the advantage enjoyed by New York and Boston of an isolated anchorage ground, of ample extent, at which infected vessels may be treated without endangering other shipping, as always happens when they are detained at smaller quarantines. We happen to know that when the board was called upon to execute the provisions of the law of June 2, 1879, it took the precaution to consult not only the patron of the Bill, (himself an eminent lawyer), but also the highest legal authorities of the government, as to the powers under the law, and as to the duties which the law enjoins. Their opinions and advice was in full accord with the views which the board was inclined to take from the stand-point of maritime sanitary police. The following extract from the annual report of the board for 1881, as published in Supplement No. 12 of the Weekly Bulletin, will serve to indicate the rational grounds on which the operations of the board in this direction were undertaken, and the care which it took to fortify itself with the opinions and advice of the highest legal authorities of the government :

"MARITIME QUARANTINE.

"A few weeks after the organization of the board under the constituting Act of March 3, 1879, new duties were assigned to it by the quarantine Act, approved June 2, 1879, entitled 'An Act to prevent the introduction of contagious and infectious diseases into the United States,' and the sum of five hundred thousand dollars was appropriated to meet the expenses to be incurred in carrying out its provisions.

“During the whole of the ensuing summer the efforts of the board were directed to the end of stamping out existing outbreaks of yellow fever which had already been introduced into the country; but as soon as the pressure of this exigency had ceased the board solicited an expression of the opinion of eminent legal authorities as to the measures by which it might lawfully and efficiently execute the provisions of an Act which had for its main object the prevention of the introduction of contagious and infectious diseases into the United States from foreign countries and from one State to another. In conformity with the general tenor of the opinions thus gathered, the board felt it to be its duty to devise some means whereby its aid could be extended to State and municipal boards of health in such a manner as would establish a reasonably satisfactory system of quarantine police for all of the ports through which infectious diseases, and especially yellow fever, were likely to find entrance into the United States, when the local authorities were unable without this aid to provide such sanitary safeguards for their own ports and the surrounding country.

“The entire fund at its disposal would not have sufficed to establish the most moderately equipped quarantine stations at one-half of the numerous exposed ports on the South Atlantic and Gulf coasts. These ports being within the yellow fever zone and maintaining close commercial relations with the ports of Cuba and some other tropical countries in which that fever has become permanently established, are constantly exposed to the risk of importing and then of disseminating the infection.

“But even if this difficulty had not existed, there was another equally embarrassing. The Act of June 2, 1879, by its third section authorizes the National Board of Health to aid State and municipal boards of health ‘as far as it lawfully may’ in the execution and enforcement of their quarantine rules and regulations. The limitation precluded the donation of the public funds to the local authorities to be used in the construction of quarantine buildings unless both

the buildings and the land they occupied were made the property of the United States, in conformity with the provisions of Section 355 of the Revised Statutes. When the attention of the patrons of the Bill was called to this fact, and it was represented that the law would prove nugatory as to the attainment of its main object, that of preventing the importation of infectious diseases from abroad, unless the funds could be applied to the construction of hospitals, lazarettos, wharves, &c., a supplementary Act was introduced, and, having passed both houses of Congress, was approved by the President July 2, just a month after the passage of the original Act. This amendment provides (Sec. 6) that 'the Board of Health shall have power, when they may deem it necessary, with the consent and approval of the Secretary of the Treasury, as a means of preventing the importation of contagious or infectious diseases into the United States, or into one State from another, to erect temporary quarantine buildings, and to acquire on behalf of the United States titles to real estate for that purpose, or to rent houses, if there be any suitable, at such points or places as are named in such Section.'

\* \* \* \* \*

"These stations were thus proposed to be established and conducted in aid of State or municipal boards with the view of preventing the importation of infectious diseases into the United States, and in every instance an earnest solicitation on the part of these authorities for the establishment of the stations in question, with a declaration of their inability without such aid to furnish adequate protection for themselves and for the country at large, preceded any action in that direction on the part of this board. When action was taken, the board believed that it was carrying out the wishes of the national legislature as expressed in the Act of June 2, 1879, and knew that it was in complete conformity with the construction put upon that Act by the highest legal authority of the government.

"Inasmuch, however, as Congress failed to make the full



appropriation which was estimated to be necessary for the efficient execution of the law, the board withheld any further application of its funds to the construction of buildings, substituting therefor temporary and imperfect arrangements at the quarantine station in Sapelo Sound, off the coast of Georgia, and at Hampton Roads, in Virginia, and suspending all action in regard to proposed disbursements at the Charleston quarantine. It was assumed in the debate in Congress on this subject that the amount of the prospective cost of these improvements, as stated in the estimates furnished by the board, had actually been expended, and this assumption was the ground of much unfavorable criticism on the alleged extravagance of the board. But, although it was the intention of the board to make contracts for the three stations, accidental circumstances, which have been explained in the quarterly reports, hereto appended (Appendix A), had precluded their complete consummation at the date of the Act of Congress, except in the single case of Ship Island station, off the coast of Mississippi—the works at Sapelo Sound not having proceeded to the extent of the actual construction of the buildings.

“In the meantime earnest applications have been addressed to this board by the health authorities of many of the ports on the South Atlantic sea-board, from Fernandina to Norfolk, soliciting the establishment and equipment of the suspended stations, and representing their utter inability, without aid from the general government, to provide fully-equipped stations at their respective ports.”

Again, Mr. Blount is reported in the *Congressional Record* of July 8, 1882, as making the following statement :

“It was not intended to fix on us the National Board of Health, but to place in the hands of the government funds to be used in the event cholera or yellow fever should break out. Now, sir, what was the result? Immediately following this the National Board of Health, with this sort of statute, taking effect on the 1st July of that year, went to work, and when we reached here in December we found it had made

*contracts* not only consuming the whole \$500,000 but they had to come forward and ask for a deficiency of \$300,000 or \$400,000. The first thing we knew they were investigating measles and chicken-pox, and all sorts of diseases, in all of the cities of the Union, when it was distinctly in conflict with the purpose of Congress. \* \* \* It was never intended to create a board of health to take into consideration all of these diseases, but it was created simply for the purpose of looking to some means of preventing the introduction and spread of the great scourges of cholera and yellow fever, and nothing more," etc.

It would be difficult to condense into one short statement a greater number of gross misrepresentations than are contained in this part of Mr. Blount's remarks. Let them be noticed in the order in which they are stated :

1st. The National Board of Health was "fixed on us" by the constituting Act, which has no limitation, and which was passed by Congress and approved by the President three months before the additional Act of June 2d conferred new powers and imposed new duties in connection with quarantine operations.

2d. Neither in the constituting Act nor in the subsequent Acts of June 2d and July 2d is either cholera or yellow fever mentioned at all. The reference is always to "contagious and infectious diseases" generally.

3d. The astounding statement that when Congress assembled in December, 1879, the board had "made contracts" not only consuming the \$500,000 but had to come forward and ask for a deficiency of \$300,000 or \$400,000, is inexplicable. We find in the annual report of the board for 1879, (page 24), an itemized account of the expenditures from the date of its organization to December 31st, 1879, and the gross amount is only \$154,002.42 ; and when it is remembered that much the greater part of this amount was spent in stamping out the severe epidemic of yellow fever in Memphis and smaller ones in New Orleans, in the Teche country of Louisiana, and a few other localities in the Mississippi Valley

States, while most of the balance was used in connection with the initiatory steps towards inaugurating the system of refuge, maritime stations, and the Mississippi River inspection service, it will be readily seen that the board deserves praise for the economical administration of the public funds placed at its disposal. It is true that in the same report estimates were made of desirable expenditures for the next six months, bringing these expenditures down to the end of the current fiscal year and then for the fiscal year next ensuing. But, as already shown by extracts from succeeding annual reports, these estimated expenditures were not carried out, owing to the opposition made to the proposed expenditures, and especially to Ship Island and Sapelo, by Mr. Blount, then Chairman of the Sub-Committee on the sundry civil appropriation Bill. Mr. Blount's ignorance of this fact, if he is ignorant, admits of no excuse. The exact facts have been repeatedly stated in succeeding reports of the board, and Senator Harris, from the select committee to investigate and report the best means of preventing the introduction and spread of epidemic diseases, submitted early in May a report, which was duly printed by order of the Senate, and was reprinted in the National Health Bulletin May 20, 1882. In this report Senator Harris, speaking from the record, properly states that "the expenses of the board for the first three years of its existence, ending April 3, 1882, aggregates \$506,216.17, or an average of \$168,738.72 per year—the whole expenditure for the three years being about \$44,000 less than the amount appropriated for the first year.

4th. We learn, on inquiry, that the board has never investigated either measles or chicken-pox, as gratuitously asserted by Mr. Blount. It has employed competent experts to investigate the causes of *diphtheria*, an infectious disease, which, in any given number of years, counts ten times more victims in the United States than have ever fallen in the same time under the great epidemic scourges of cholera and yellow fever. Their authority to make such investigation is not derived from the quarantine law of June 2, 1879, but from

the general powers conferred by the constituting Act of March 3, 1879. By this Act the board is required to "make, or cause to be made, such special examinations and investigations at any place or places within the United States, or at foreign ports, as they may deem best, to aid in the execution of this Act and in the promotion of its objects." And in Section 2 it is prescribed that "the duties of the National Board of Health shall be to obtain information upon all matters affecting the public health, to advise the several departments of the government, the Executives of the several States and the Commissioners of the District of Columbia on all questions submitted by them, or whenever, in the opinion of the board, such advice may tend to the preservation of the public health." And yet, in the face of such a declaration of the duties of the board in a positive law, of which Mr. Blount professes to give an authoritative exposition, he has persistently asserted that it was created simply for the purpose of looking to some means of preventing the introduction and spread of the great scourges of cholera and yellow fever, and nothing more, and that its existence was limited to four years. Here then was another tissue of misrepresentation, and it is by such means that a representative from Georgia, stirred by an insane ambition to be considered the special guardian of the public treasury, has co-operated with such selfish politicians as Cox, Hiseock, Butterworth and Robeson in their efforts to deprive the South of the protection it has enjoyed during the last three years from the operations of the National Board of Health.

In striking contrast with the spirit and action of Mr. Blount, Senator Harris, of Tennessee, has given a succinct statement of the facts which demonstrate the value of the board as an instrumentality for the preservation of the public health in general, and especially for preventing the introduction of infectious diseases of exotic origin.

This statement is made in a report of the Senate Committee on Epidemic Diseases to accompany a Bill (S. 1049) May, 1882. In that report it is asserted that "no State or muni-



city can in the exercise of their limited police powers effectually prevent the introduction of contagious or infectious diseases into the United States from foreign countries or from one State to another; but if their powers were fully equal to the necessities of the case, local boards of health and sanitary authorities are so much in sympathy with the commercial interests and influences of their respective localities that the people of the other States will not be content to rely upon them for protection. The importation of contagion, or persons or goods infected with contagion, into this country from foreign countries, or into one State from another, is as much the creature of commerce as is the importation of a cargo of sugar or a bale of muslin; to do either is an act of commerce—indeed, it is commerce itself. ‘Congress shall have power to regulate commerce with foreign nations and among the several States,’ says the Constitution. This Bill does not propose to interfere in any manner or to any extent with the police regulations of any State or municipality. It proposes to act within a domain which the Constitution has placed beyond the reach of police regulations and State authority. It proposes to ‘regulate commerce with foreign nations and among the several States,’ and so to regulate it as to strip it from contagion—from the importation of which, in times past, the people of this country have suffered so often and so severely. The experience of the last three years under the present law, (inoperative as portions have been), inspires a high degree of confidence in our ability, by a strict enforcement of the necessary and proper regulations, to effectually prevent the recurrence of such epidemics in the future in the United States. \* \* \*

The Bill reported by the committee does not propose to conflict or in any way interfere with any State or municipal board of health, or its rules and regulations. So far from it, it proposes to co-operate with them in the execution of all of their rules and regulations to prevent the importation of contagious diseases; and if, in any case, their rules and regulations are, in the opinion of the National Board, not sufficient

to prevent such importation, then, under the orders of the President, the National Board is authorized to make such additional rules and regulations as, in its opinion, are sufficient; and when approved by the President of the United States they become valid, and the State or municipal board is requested to execute and enforce them; but if it fails or refuses to do so, then the President is authorized to detail or appoint an officer of the United States to enforce them.

“The report of the board of scientific experts appointed in December 1878, shows that yellow fever has invaded this country sixty-five times within the present century, and that the proof conclusively shows that almost all of these epidemics were the result of imported contagion from countries south of us, while in no case is there satisfactory proof that the disease ever originated in this country.

“From the best information that the committee has been able to obtain, it is of opinion that neither yellow fever nor cholera is indigenous to any part of this country, and that if we will adopt measures such as will effectually prevent their importation we will be free from them forever.

“We have had State and municipal boards of health for very many years in the past, but we have also had epidemics of imported contagious and infectious diseases not unfrequently within the same period. If we would prevent these epidemics, we must have a general system applicable to every port through which contagion can be imported, uniform in its requirements in respect to quarantine, and rigidly enforced, without regard to local commercial interests or influences, and the time for greatest vigilance in the enforcement of these preventive measures is when the country is entirely free from these diseases.

“But even when they have appeared, the experience of 1879 has shown that, with proper care and effort, they can be confined within narrow limits, if not stamped out entirely. But to do this requires prompt action, and an amount of means rarely, if ever, at the disposal of a municipal or State board of health.

“In the yellow fever epidemic of 1878, which raged so fearfully and fatally at New Orleans, Memphis, Holly Springs and Grenada, and extended far up the Ohio river, and to many other places, the actual loss to the people of the United States in the element of material wealth, to say nothing of impaired health and loss of human life, is variously estimated, by those best informed on the subject, at from \$100,000,000 to \$200,000,000.

“In his message to Congress, in December, 1878, Mr. Hayes said :

“‘The enjoyment of health by our people generally has, however, been interrupted during the past season by the prevalence of a fatal pestilence—the yellow fever—in some portions of the Southern States, creating an emergency which called for prompt and extraordinary measures of relief. The disease appeared as an epidemic at New Orleans and at other places on the Lower Mississippi soon after midsummer.

“‘It was rapidly spread by fugitives from the infected cities and towns, and did not disappear until early in November.

“‘The States of Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee have suffered severely.

“‘About one hundred thousand cases are believed to have occurred, of which about twenty thousand, according to intelligent estimates, proved fatal.

“‘It is impossible to estimate, with any approach to accuracy, the loss to the country occasioned by this epidemic. It is reckoned by the hundred millions of dollars.’

“So gigantic in proportions and fatal in consequences was this epidemic that it produced general demoralization and panic, inducing all persons who could get away from the infected places to seek safety in flight, scattering throughout the country. Many of them were stricken down in other localities, thus spreading the disease over a large extent of country, producing a general state of apprehension and alarm, which prompted towns and villages, yet free from the pestilence, to establish shot-gun quarantines for their pro-

tection, thus blocking the ordinary channels of communication and transportation, suspending commerce, and paralyzing the entire business of the country.

"The epidemic of 1879, at Memphis and New Orleans, made its appearance before the National Board of Health had been able to perfect its plans of prevention; though it is, in the opinion of the committee, doubtful whether that epidemic could have been prevented, as it is not certain whether it originated from germs of the epidemic of 1878, which had survived, or in fresh importation of the disease.

"But, under the rules and regulations adopted by the board to deal with it, it was actually stamped out in New Orleans and confined to the limits of Memphis; and, instead of the general demoralization and panic, with suspension of business, trade and commerce, which pervaded the country in 1878, commerce and communication with the infected cities were regulated, not stopped, or even retarded to any considerable extent, and the general business of the country went on its usual methods, and through its usual channels, without serious interruption.

"Instead of panic and alarm, confidence and a sense of security pervaded the country.

"To illustrate, take the tonnage of a single railroad. The Illinois Central, at the one point of Cairo, sent to and received from the South, in 1879, 100,470,000 tons of freight more than it received and sent for the same period in 1878, in addition to which the passenger trade was scarcely interrupted in 1879, while it was almost entirely suspended in 1878.

"Dr. Rauch, Secretary of the Illinois State Board of Health, from whose report the above statement is taken, says this result could not have been reached without the co-operation of the National Board of Health, and its utmost exertions were required to allay the fears of the local authorities.

"The experience of the country during and since 1879 has inspired great confidence in the South and Southwest in the possibility of effectually preventing, or successfully dealing with and controlling these epidemics.



"The great transportation companies of the South, both river and rail, are unanimous in their approval of the action and methods of the National Board in dealing with such cases, because experience has shown that they give the necessary security against the spread of disease without stopping, or retarding to any considerable extent, commercial intercourse.

"They have learned from their own experience that the certificate of the National Board of Health as to the sanitary condition of any city, or place, is accepted by other cities and States as testimony coming from a strictly impartial and well-informed authority, independent of all local interests or influences, commercial or otherwise.

"The action and methods of the National Board have been approved by the State and local boards of health throughout the country, almost without exception, by the American Medical Association, the American Public Health Association, the National Academy of Sciences, the transportation companies of the South and Southwest, boards of trade, cotton exchanges, and other associations of business men throughout the country. In the opinion of the committee, it has accomplished much, and is capable of accomplishing highly important results of great benefit to the country—results which can be accomplished by no other agency.

"For the greater security of the lives of that portion of our people who chance to be afloat upon our waters, given by our light-house system and life-saving service, we annually expend about \$3,200,000. This expenditure, necessary and proper, as the committee believes, is for the benefit of a very small proportion of our people, perhaps not more than one in a thousand, while the exertions and operations of the National Board of Health are intended to protect the lives and health, and certainly do benefit, the whole people of the country.

"If it be admitted that the action and operations of the board even tend to the preservation of life and health to any, however small the extent, such fact makes it eminently

worthy of our support, and, in the opinion of the committee, it should be sustained with such powers and means as will enable it to perform its functions fully, promptly and efficiently.

“The expenses of the board for the first three years of its existence, ending April 3, 1882, aggregate \$506,216.17, or an average of \$168,738.72 per year—the whole expenditures for the three years being about \$44,000 less than the amount appropriated for the first year.

“Much the greater portion of these expenditures have been made in aiding State and municipal boards in their quarantine work, in the enforcement of quarantine regulations necessary to prevent the importation of contagion into the United States or into one State from another, and in establishing and maintaining quarantine stations at Ship Island and Sapelo Sound—at the former of which places the board found it necessary to construct a rude hospital, warehouse and wharf of ample capacity, while at the latter they have used boats and tents.

“These stations the board found indispensably necessary for the care and treatment of infected vessels, cargoes, passengers and crews.

“Under the regulations of the board a number of ships infected with yellow fever have been sent to these stations, and, after treatment, allowed to proceed to and enter our ports without giving rise to a single case of the disease.

“When the memories of the fearful ravages of the epidemic of 1878 were fresh, both houses of Congress were ready to appropriate, and did appropriate, all that the committee asked for the purpose of enabling us to find, if possible, a means of preventing the recurrence of this terrible scourge; but as the memories of the hundred thousand sufferers and the twenty thousand new-made graves of that period are fading from our minds, the committee has experienced more or less of difficulty in obtaining the appropriations necessary to enable the board to perform the important duties which devolve upon it.

"The practical question, as it appears to the committee, is, the country being now free from yellow fever and cholera, shall we use the necessary means to keep it so, or relax into indifference, withhold the powers and the necessary means to prevent their importation, and await the outbreak of another epidemic, which will cost the country hundreds of millions of dollars and thousands of the lives of our people, to awaken us to the importance of preventive measures, in which the committee believes we can find absolute security?"

It is to be hoped that these views, which were also advocated in the House of Representatives by other distinguished Congressmen with great earnestness and ability, will yet find favor with Congress, and that the ignorance and prejudice of a few embittered opponents of the National Board of Health will not be permitted to deprive the country of the value of its services.

Others may do as they will, but

"Let me never  
To this good purpose, that so fairly shows,  
Dream of impediment."

